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HOUSEKEEPERS' CHAT

Tuesday, February 21, 1933.

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Subject: "Helpful Shelves." Information from the Bureau of Home Economics, U.S.D.A. and the President's Conference on Home Building and Home Ownership.

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Uncle Ebenezer always declares that this is the time of year to get out the hammer and saw and "perk up" the house. He means doing those little odd jobs that help make any home comfortable and convenient. A handy shelf here, a homemade rack there, some convenient hooks somewhere else--just little things that don't cost a cent, but that add a lot of comfort to the household. Many of us have more time than money to spend these days. Why not turn that extra time to profit by making such simple home improvements? Why not take a day off to put up shelves in your house? Maybe you never thought of shelves as an aid to family peace and happiness. But the right shelf in the right place often saves confusion, makes the children more orderly, and helps the housework go more smoothly and easily. Whenever I hear a woman complain that her house is "just impossible" to keep in order, I suspect that she needs more convenient shelves, more places to keep things. Cluttered rooms where nobody can find anything, where Bobby's toys, Dad's books, Mother's sewing and everybody's rubbers, gloves, or scarves are lying about--well, confused, disorderly rooms like that may be the cause of Mother's nerves or Father's temper. And all for the lack of a shelf here and there. Remember that good old rule for a peaceful home -- "A place for everything and everything in its place?" That's a helpful rule to keep in mind. If you have shelves where you need them, you have a place for many of your possessions, even if you live in a small apartment. If the children have low shelves for their toys, if Dad has plenty of shelves for his books, if Mother has shelves for her sewing supplies, and if everybody has shelf room in the downstairs closet for hats, rubbers and gloves, you'll find the living room easy to keep tidy and the family much more peaceful and contented. Putting up shelves is a simple job for anyone handy with tools. You can use scraps of lumber or even old packing boxes.

To make the shelves most helpful, plan them beforehand, instead of putting them up hit-or-miss. First, plan what you want to store. Then, plan the size of the shelf to hold it and the most convenient place to put that shelf. In other words, always fit your shelf to the stored article. Consider the size of the article, its shape and where you want to keep it. Did you ever notice that most china cupboards have wasted space? Usually the shelves are placed too far apart for the dishes they hold. And have you ever noticed that too wide a kitchen shelf makes searching for supplies a game of hide and seek? Carefully planned shelves are the most convenient.

Let's consider where some shelves might come in handy in your house. One place that needs plenty of shelves is the coat closet near your front door. I hope you have a downstairs closet. It can prevent so much wear and tear on the family, especially on Mother. If you haven't a closet, you can arrange a handy place for wraps in a corner of the kitchen or hall. School days can be trying times when the youngsters are always losing caps and sweaters just at school time, of walking over clean floors with muddy rubbers and wet coats, or scrapping over

who owns the mittens or the stray rubber. Boys and girls need their own special place for their belongings and they need to get the habit of putting them in that place. Shelves in the coat closet of convenient height and size will hold school books, gloves, scarves and hats on hat stands. A lower shelf near the floor will hold overshoes in a neat row. Fasten each pair of rubbers or galoshes or gloves together with a snap clothes pin. Besides the shelves in the coat closet, you'll also want hooks and rods for hangers, also placed at the right height for the children to reach easily. As for your upstairs closets, of course, they need to be convenient also. They need high shelves for hats, lower shelves for shoes, rods and hangers for dresses and coats, and low rods with small hangers and low hooks for the children's use.

A shelf set in a niche in your hallway is a convenient place to hold the telephone, the directory, and a pad and pencil. Make this shelf low enough so that you can sit down while phoning. And slip the telephone stool underneath the shelf where it will be out of the way when not in use.

The kitchen is the place of many cupboards--different shelves for different kinds of equipment. You need shelves for dishes, shelves for kitchen utensils, shelves for storing supplies and so forth. You can make a very small kitchen much more convenient and comfortable to work in, if you fill most of the wall space within reach with handy shelves. Over the sink you can build some small shelves -- or better, a small cabinet, to hold scouring materials, soaps, brushes and so on. Over your mixing table you can put up a very narrow shelf to hold a row of spice boxes and a larger shelf to hold flour, sugar and other supplies that you would be using at this point. Nearby, you might put up a small wooden rack to hold knives, spoons and a can opener. Over the stove you'll find a shelf handy to hold salt and pepper, the coffee pot, coffee, the kitchen clock, holders, and so forth. Near the stove also you'll want a rack to hold the lids for kettles. On the underside of many of these small kitchen shelves you can put in hooks for such small kitchen utensils as egg beaters and strainers. Such utensils are always most convenient if you keep them hanging up within arm's reach instead of in a drawer.

Shelves solve the problem of what to do with stray articles around the house. They give these wanderers a home of their own. Shelves can be both decorative and useful. They cost practically nothing for the home carpenter to build, they fill up waste space and they add to the order, comfort and peace of the household.

Tomorrow we'll plan a George Washington's Birthday dinner.

